

MARVEL

2

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TASKMASTER




2013
cf

Using innate photographic reflexes, Tony Masters is able to replicate any action he witnesses, no matter the complexity. Using these skills, combined with an arsenal of deadly facsimile weapons, he operates as a henchmen trainer and mercenary for hire known throughout the underworld as...

TASKMASTER

"THE RUBICON TRIGGER"

PART TWO

MARIA HILL is dead, and the entire world thinks Taskmaster did it. This time, though, he's innocent. Unfortunately for Tony, that's irrelevant. The BLACK WIDOW is already on his trail and hot for revenge, and she won't be the only one.

There is one man who believes Tony's story: former S.H.I.E.L.D. Director NICK FURY. Fury's already saved Tony's %!# once, and now he wants something in return. Before she died, Hill was working on something called the Rubicon Trigger, an old H.A.M.M.E.R project. To gain access to it, Fury needs the kinesic signatures of three people: Squadron Supreme Director PHIL COULSON, Agents of Wakanda Director OKOYE and South Korea's N.I.S. Tiger Division Director AMI HAN.

In other words, Taskmaster has to find, fight and escape from three of the most dangerous human beings on this planet.

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NOW.
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"SO. FURY.

"WE'VE GOT THREE
SPIES IN THREE
COUNTRIES.

"AND YOU WANT ME TO GO
COZY UP TO EACH OF THEM
AND COPY THEIR WALK,
THEIR BODY LANGUAGE?"

"THEIR KINESIC SIGNATURE.
BUT THAT'S ABOUT THE
SIZE OF IT, TONY."

"SURE.

"SO WHERE DO
YOU WANT TO
START?"

"RIGHT HERE
IN THE U.S.A.

"YOU SURVIVE THIS
ONE, THEN I'LL
BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS
FOR THE NEXT JOBS."

KEEP THE
CHANGE.

**THEN.
SAFE HOUSE DELTA.**

THAT'S
WHY I LIKE
YOU, FURY.
YOU'RE
ALL HEART.



AND THAT'S
WHY I LIKE
YOU, TONY.
YOU'RE A
VICIOUS THUG
WITHOUT A SINGLE
REDEEMING
VIRTUE.
MAKES YOU
USEFUL.

OH
STOP.

WHAT'S
NEXT, YOU
GOING TO
PULL MY PIGTAILS?



THIS
SHOULD BE
EASY, AREN'T
YOU TWO
PALS?

PHIL COULSON
WAS MY BEST
FRIEND. WE SERVED
TOGETHER IN THE
RANGERS AND
THEN S.H.I.E.L.D.

WHAT'S
THE MATTER?
YOU TWO HAVE
A FALLING
OUT?

NO.





"HE DIED."



"YOUR PAL DEADPOOL
PUT A BULLET THROUGH
HIS HEART DURING THAT
HYDRA TAKEOVER
BUSINESS."

"WADE'S NO PAL
OF MINE, BUT
DO GO ON."



"WHATEVER."

"NOW HE'S BACK, AND I DON'T
KNOW WHY, OR HOW, OR WHAT HE'S
DOING RUNNING A SUPER HERO
TEAM FOR THE PENTAGON."



"BUT IF HE'S STILL
CHEESE COULSON..."

WEDNESDAY.



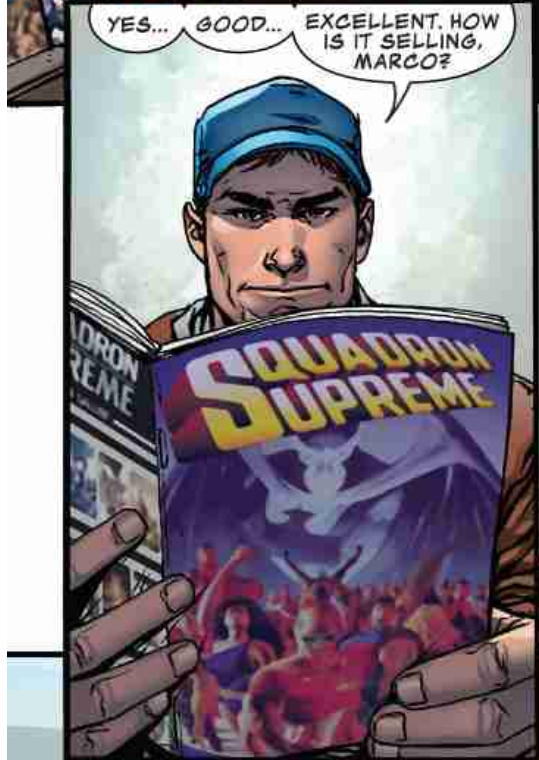
"...THEN HE'LL BE
PICKING UP HIS
COMICS TODAY."



HOW'S IT GOING, MR. SMITH?

FINE AS WINE, MARCO.

I HAVE YOUR BOOKS RIGHT HERE, JUST A MINUTE...



YES... GOOD... EXCELLENT. HOW IS IT SELLING, MARCO?



FLYING OFF THE SHELVES.

"SQUADRON" IS THE BEST-SELLER, BUT "HYPERION", "NIGHTHAWK" AND "ZARDA" ARE ALL MOVING COPIES TOO.



EVERYONE LOVES THE SQUADRON! AMERICAN HEROES, FOR AMERICA!

WHEN THE AVENGERS PULLED UP STAKES AND GOT IN WAKANDA'S POCKET, WHO WAS HERE FOR THEM? THE SQUADRON SUPREME OF AMERICA!



WATCH THIS.

HEY PAL, WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE TEAM?

HUH? UH...

UH-OH.





BELIEVE IT
OR NOT...

...I'VE BEEN
PLANNING TO
SETTLE YOUR HASH
FOR A WHILE,
TASKMASTER.

I'LL JUST
MOVE UP MY
SCHEDULE.

BUT COULSON HAS ALWAYS
BEEN A LITTLE TWERP, AND
I FELT LIKE PUTTING THE
BOOT IN A BIT.



YEAH SURE, YOU
GOT ME SHAKING
IN MY PIRATE
BOOT--



HYPERION.



UH-OH.

UH-OH.



CONTROL, I
NEED IMMEDIATE
COVER!

DC EMERGENCY
SERVICES HAVE
BEEN NOTIFIED OF
THREE GINNED-UP
THREATS, BUT HE'S
IGNORING THEM. ATC
CLOCKED HIM HITTING
SUPERSONIC
IMMEDIATELY.

HYPERION
IS INBOUND
IN THREE--

ANGH!



THEN!

I KNOW
WHAT YOU LOOK
LIKE, TONY. I
HAVE A FILE
ON YOU.

YOU DON'T
HAVE TO DO
THAT.



THE
SKULL'S ALL
YOU NEED
TO SEE.



OKAY.

SO HERE'S
THE SITUATION.
IF THIS GOES
SIDWAYS, THEY'RE
GOING TO COME
OUT STRONG.

IT'LL BE
HYPERION.

MAKES
SENSE.



SQUADRON'S NOT THE
AVENGERS. THEY'RE
ABOUT PR, THEY'RE
THERE TO BE
SEEN.

I SEEN
THE COMICS,
THE TV
SPOTS.

THEY WON'T
PLAY A DEUCE
WHEN THEY CAN
SPLASH OUT
WITH AN ACE.



SO.

WHAT DO
WE GOT ON
HYPERION?



HYPERION'S
COMING.

I'M GOING
TO DIE.

--TWO--



NOT ENTIRELY
SURE WHY I'M
RUNNING.

HYPERION CAN BREAK
THE SOUND BARRIER
SCRATCHING HIS NOSE.

BUT WHAT ELSE
AM I GOING
TO DO?

--ONE--



--CONTACT.

KRA-KOW

AAAAAH!



HE'S
NOT--

--HE'S NOT
HUMAN--



I'M SORRY
YOU BOTHERED
GETTING UP.

BACK DOWN
ON THE GROUND,
PLEASE.

OR I'LL
PUT YOU
THERE.

HEY...
HYPERION...COME
ON, LET'S TALK
ABOUT THIS--

OKAY.



LET'S GO
GET KILLED.



I ONLY
HAVE SO MANY
WARNINGS TO
GIVE.



YEAH,
WELL...

...GOD
LOVES A
TRIER.

MY GUTS ARE
ICE WATER.

IT TAKES EVERYTHING
I GOT TO COME
AT HIM.

GUH!

WHAMMM

WHAMMM

WHAMMM

AND I COME AT HIM
WITH EVERYTHING
I GOT.

AND I DON'T
EVEN COME
NEAR HIM.





OVER THE YEARS, WE'VE ENCOUNTERED A RANGE OF HYPERIONS FROM DIFFERENT PARALLEL DIMENSIONS.

IT'S NOT EASY TO TELL THEM APART. I GOT NO IDEA WHICH ONE IT IS THAT CHEESE HAS GOT ON HIS LEASH.



ARE THEY DIFFERENT? DOES IT MATTER WHICH ONE HE'S GOT?

SOME ARE HEROES, OTHERS, LUNATICS. IT'LL MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE FIELD, IF IT COMES TO IT.

WELL DAMN.



THE WAY HE MOVES... I CAN READ HIM, BUT HE'S... OFF.

WHAT IS HE, MUTANT? ALIEN? POWERS ASIDE, HE'S NOT HUMAN, NEVER WAS.

BAD NEWS, THAT'S WHAT HE IS.



HMM.

GUY'S GOT THE POWER OF A RHINO ON PCP, IS FAST AS HELL AND CAN SHOOT LASERS FROM HIS EYES. ANYTHING I HIT HIM WITH, HE'LL SHRUG. ANYTHING I SHOOT AT HIM, HE'LL ZAP OUT OF THE SKY.



GOING TO HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING CUTE.

IF IT COMES TO THAT.

SURE.



IT'S DIFFERENT
IN BRIEFING.
IN PREP.



WHEN YOU'RE
PREPPING, YOU
TELL YOURSELF
YOU CAN BEAT
HIM. YOU
CONVINCE
YOURSELF.



YOU CONVINCE
YOURSELF THAT
HE'S JUST A MAN.



BECAUSE A
MAN, YOU
CAN BEAT.





HE'S GOD.



AND GOD...

HRAAGH!



...IS PLAYING WITH ME.



BUSINESS I'M IN, YOUR TOOLS MEAN EVERYTHING. I GET THE BEST. WHAT I'M SAYING IS:

THAT SWORD CAN CUT ANYTHING.



EXCEPT GOD.

KRAAKKK







...SO WE GOT A LAST-CHANCE SHOT, A HAIL MARY.

WELL? SPIT IT OUT, YOU TEASE.

WE DON'T KNOW A LOT ABOUT HYPERION, OR HYPERIONS, WHATEVER.

BUT, I GOT FILES ON EVERYONE, AND I FOUND SOMETHING. SOMETHING THAT HAD BEEN DELETED, BUT NOT WELL ENOUGH.



COUPLE YEARS BACK, A HYPERION GOT PINCHED. AND HE WAS PUT IN THE THUNDERBOLTS PROGRAM, WHEN LUKE CAGE AND JOHN WALKER WERE RUNNING IT.



GO ON...

AND WHEN HE WAS IN THE T-BOLTS, THEY HAD TO BE ABLE TO CONTROL HIM.

AND SO THEY DID. WITH THE ONE THING THAT COULD HURT HIM.



ARGONITE RADIATION.

SO RARE IT MIGHT AS WELL NOT EXIST.

BUT GUESS WHO HAD ACCESS TO THE THUNDERBOLTS' OLD VAULTS?



COOL, I GUESS.

I'LL JUST HAVE TO HIT SOMEONE WHO MOVES AT SUPERSONIC SPEED. NO PROBLEM.



I CAN'T HEAR YOU.
SHOULD I TAKE THAT AS A SURRENDER?
...BOOM...



BOOM?



...BOOMERANG.



SCARED.
KILL.
MURDER.



KILL.

KILL.

CUTTIS
THROAT.

BASHIS
BRAINS.

AAAGHHH!!

TASKMASTER?
COME IN!



KILL.

...NOT
SO TOUGH
NOW...

WHEEZE!

...ARE
YOU...

WHUDD

TASKMASTER,
DISENGAGE!



KILL.

...NOT SO
TOUGH...

...NOT...SO
FAST...

DISENGAGE,
YOU HEAR ME?
DO NOT DO
THIS!

HUDD



KILL.

KILL.

KILL.

TONY, YOU
DO THIS AND
THEY'LL NEVER
STOP COMING
FOR YOU!

BE A
PROFESSIONAL,
DAMMIT!



HUFF!

WHEEZE!



REM...
REMEMBER...
THISSS.
YER ONLY
ALIVE...
...CAUSE I
HAD SOMEWHERE
T'BEEE.



!WHEEZE!
CONNNNTROLL...
GET ME OUTTA
HERE...
I'M
COMING,
TONY.



YOU TOOK
A HELL OF A
BEATING, SETTING
UP THAT SHOT. WHY DIDN'T
YOU TAKE IT
EARLIER?



...HADDA
MAKE HIM...
!KOFF!
!KOFF!
...HADDA
MAKE HIM
UNDERESTIMATE
ME...
...MAKE
HIM THINK I
WASN'T...
...WASN'T
NOTHING...



...BUT I
SHOWED'M.
I'MMA
SHOW THEM
ALL.

LATER.



TO BE CONTINUED!

NEXT ISSUE

